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State asserts land claims at ANWR boundary

(Anchorage, AK) – The State of Alaska is seeking priority conveyance of nearly 20,000 acres of uplands at the western boundary of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR).

The State previously requested these lands, located between the Staines and Canning rivers, under the Alaska Statehood Act and Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

Lands within the refuge are not available for state ownership, but, for many years, the western boundary of ANWR has been improperly mapped by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The State contends the federal agency's map includes land that is not within ANWR.

"My administration began a thorough review of the boundary dispute after the Department of Natural Resources received bids in 2011 for oil and gas tracts on tidal and submerged lands at the state-federal boundary," said Governor Sean Parnell.

The Parnell administration's work built upon earlier work by the State and federal agencies on the boundary dispute. This renewed effort began in 2012 and included historical and legal research as well as a field inspection by DNR and the Department of Law in July 2014.

"I'm pleased that we've developed a solid case for priority conveyance of lands the State of Alaska originally selected in 1964," Parnell said.

State ownership of these lands has implications for the future of oil and gas activity on the eastern North Slope. "Just a few miles away, we are seeing billions of dollars of investment at the Point Thomson field," Parnell said.

"Alaskans have suffered from many roadblocks to resource development on federal lands," said Natural Resources Commissioner Joe Balash. "Our hope is that the BLM will move quickly to convey lands that we can offer for oil and gas leasing and development," Balash said.

DNR filed the State's request for priority conveyance for uplands along the western boundary of ANWR with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the federal agency charged with conveying lands to the State to fulfill its land entitlement.

For briefing materials related to the State's request for priority conveyance, go to http://www.dnr.alaska.gov/commis/priorities/ANWR_boundary.pdf.

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